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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes the research conducted for a doctoral thesis at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in February 1969. It gauges the effect of the complete desegregation of Chapel Hill schools on its fifth, seventh, and ninth grade students. The achievement scores of those students who attended segregated schools during 1965-66 were compared with the scores of the students who later attended desegregated schools. Comparisons were then made between students in grades five, seven, and nine of segregated schools with students at the same grade level who had experienced one and two years of desegregation. Desegregation in itself does not appear to have had any significant negative effects on the academic achievement of either race, the only significant changes having been of a positive nature. In general, Negro students failed a higher percentage of their courses than did white students during the period of this study. However, this may well be due to the orientation of the curriculum and teaching methods of Chapel Hill schools to the average middle-class white student. (JM)

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THE EFFECTS OF DESEGREGATION ON STUDENT SUCCESS IN THE CHAPEL HILL CITY SCHOOLS

by

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UD 009351

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In the Fall of 1966 the Chapel Hill City Schools completely desegregated in grades six through twelve. The following year a geographical zone plan was adopted to insure a racial balance at every grade level and in every school of the Chapel Hill School System. Thus, Chapel Hill became one of the first school systems of the South to complete the integration of students and faculty in all its schools.

It seemed quite appropriate to conduct a study to determine what effect the progress of desegregation had produced on the success of the students. Many parents had been quite apprehensive over the possibility of lowering academic standards and achievement in the schools. Some white parents had even chosen to send their children to private schools because of this apprehension over desegregation.

In order to evaluate student success the writer decided to use a comparison of standardized achievement test scores, school attendances and ratio of courses passed to courses taken as indicators of school success. The study was limited to grades five, seven and nine. Students in these grades during the school year 1965-66 were used as a control group because this was the last year that schools were largely segregated. The scores of these students who attended segregated schools were compared with the scores of the students who later attended desegregated schools. Comparisons were then made between students in grades five, seven and nine of segregated schools with students at the same grade level who had

experienced one and two years of desegregation.

Several previous studies were quite helpful in determining how this study would be conducted. In 1966 James Coleman published the results of a national survey for the U.S. Office of Education. This study showed that the average Negro children in segregated schools started school with reading ability below that of the average white student. The survey also showed that after short-term integration Negro averages were slightly higher when more than half their classmates were white. Numerous other studies have shown that Negro students attending segregated schools are behind white students in academic achievement. However, there were usually slight improvements for the Negro student in most desegregated schools.

Following this brief introduction I have included excerpts from the final chapter of my thesis which summarize my findings and outline what I feel are the important implications.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions drawn from the analysis of the data of this study include the following:

1. The white students performed considerably better on the Sequential Tests of Educational Progress than did Negro students. When compared with national norms, the mean scores for white students fell in a percentile range which was above average, while mean Negro scores fell in a percentile range which was below average.

2. Desegregation of the Chapel Hill City School System does not appear to have had any significant negative effects on the academic achievement of either race. The only significant changes

which appeared were of a positive nature.

3. The significant changes in achievement occurred in mathematics scores for both Negro and white students. Significant changes occurred in mathematics at the fifth and seventh grade levels for the Negro race, but only at the fifth grade for the white race.

4. There were no significant changes in reading achievement at any grade level in this study.

5. There was no significant change in either reading or mathematics achievement at the ninth grade level for either race.

6. The inauguration of a state wide curriculum revision in mathematics may have influenced student achievement in mathematics. The change in mathematics textbooks occurred during the second year of this study.

7. In this school system, sex seems to have only a small effect on mathematics achievement. Mathematics achievement scores show that white males scored at least as well and sometimes better than white females at all grade levels of the study. Negro males also scored as well or better than Negro females in mathematics achievement. However, the mean mathematics achievement scores for both male and female whites were above that of both male and female Negroes.

8. In this school system, girls seem to have learned to read better than boys when compared to their own race. Reading achievement scores show white females usually score higher than white males at all grade levels of the study. Negro females also scored higher than Negro males in reading achievement. The mean reading achievement scores for both male and female whites was higher when

compared to either male or female Negroes.

9. The Negro students in this school system were generally older than their white counterparts at each grade level. The mean difference in age at a particular grade level sometimes ran in excess of a half-year.

10. In general, Negro students of this system failed a higher percentage of their courses than did white students during the period of this study. There does not seem to be any definite pattern of change for either race during the period studied.

11. Females usually passed a higher percentage of their courses than did males when comparing all females to all males at each grade level.

12. There were no significant changes in attendance patterns for either race. The lowest attendance figures were those of the Negro male at the seventh and ninth grade levels during the second year of desegregation.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Desegregation of schools brings together students who are often achieving at drastically different levels. Many of the teaching methods and materials aimed at the average middle-class white student will need to be re-evaluated. Teachers will have to become competent at working with different achievement levels within the same classroom. Some school-wide grouping may be possible, but there is danger of resegregation of races in a large scale grouping. One answer to this dilemma seems to be individualized instruction. Individualized instruction would give the students the opportunity to choose and work with materials which are interesting, informative, and appropriate to the abilities of that student.

2. Desegregation of schools brings together both teachers and students from different social backgrounds. In many desegregated classrooms, both the teachers and students have brought anxieties concerning each other. Many teachers have felt inadequate to deal with discipline problems in the classroom, whether overt or more subtle. White teachers have not understood Negro students' motivations or lack of motivation in conforming to the white teachers' idea of acceptable behavior. Often, teacher expectations of students are unrealistic. Either an unrealistically high or low expectation has resulted in a lack of motivation on the part of the students.

3. Teachers of desegregated schools must respect individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. The teacher should become skilled in promoting social acceptance of different ethnic groups within the school. Often, the students will tend to resegregate themselves within the classroom. The teacher should know how to deal with this situation and be able to accomplish good class interaction when appropriate.

4. School systems should offer in-service training for teachers to help them be more effective in desegregated schools. Teachers should be helped to better understand the students they are working with. They should be kept up-to-date on the latest materials and methods which can help them become more effective in the classroom.

5. As illustrated by the reading achievement scores, female students learn to read better than do males in this school system. There seems to be a need to place greater emphasis on teaching boys to read more effectively. We need to find reading material which is more appealing to males. It is possible that more emphasis needs

to be placed on recreational reading so that boys can learn to enjoy reading.

6. Better ways need to be found to motivate academic achievement among Negro students. Middle-class white parents begin shaping or modifying the behavior of their children toward educational goals early in life. Often Negro parents have a low income and lack educational attainment, which makes it difficult to inculcate an educational value system in their children. If educators accept and promote middle-class values in all children, then it may become appropriate to find ways of reinforcing middle-class behavior in disadvantaged children. Some teachers are experimenting with monetary and material rewards as motivation for academic behavior. One teacher in the Chapel Hill system has reported remarkable success with this plan.

7. One way to improve academic achievement in desegregated schools may be through a preschool program. Headstart, kindergarten, and other preschool experiences seem to benefit disadvantaged children and help them to have a more satisfactory school experience.

8. There is a possible danger that desegregation of schools may cause more Negroes to experience academic difficulties and drop out of school. In a desegregated school the Negro student, especially the males, may find their studies more difficult and the competition much keener than in the segregated Negro schools. In this study, after the second year of desegregation Negro boys in the seventh and ninth grades stayed out of school an average of ten more days than in previous years. This may be a danger signal toward more dropouts in the future. In any event, we should strive

to better meet the Negro boys' needs in our curriculum. One possible solution may be a more meaningful vocational education program at both the junior and senior high level. This could include either vocational courses within the school or a part-time apprenticeship in a local business.

9. After desegregation, many Negro parents are not as active in school functions as they were within their own segregated schools. Many of the most active and outspoken Negro parents in the Chapel Hill community became inactive and silent in the integrated school affairs. Efforts should be made to keep all parents active in their support of the schools.